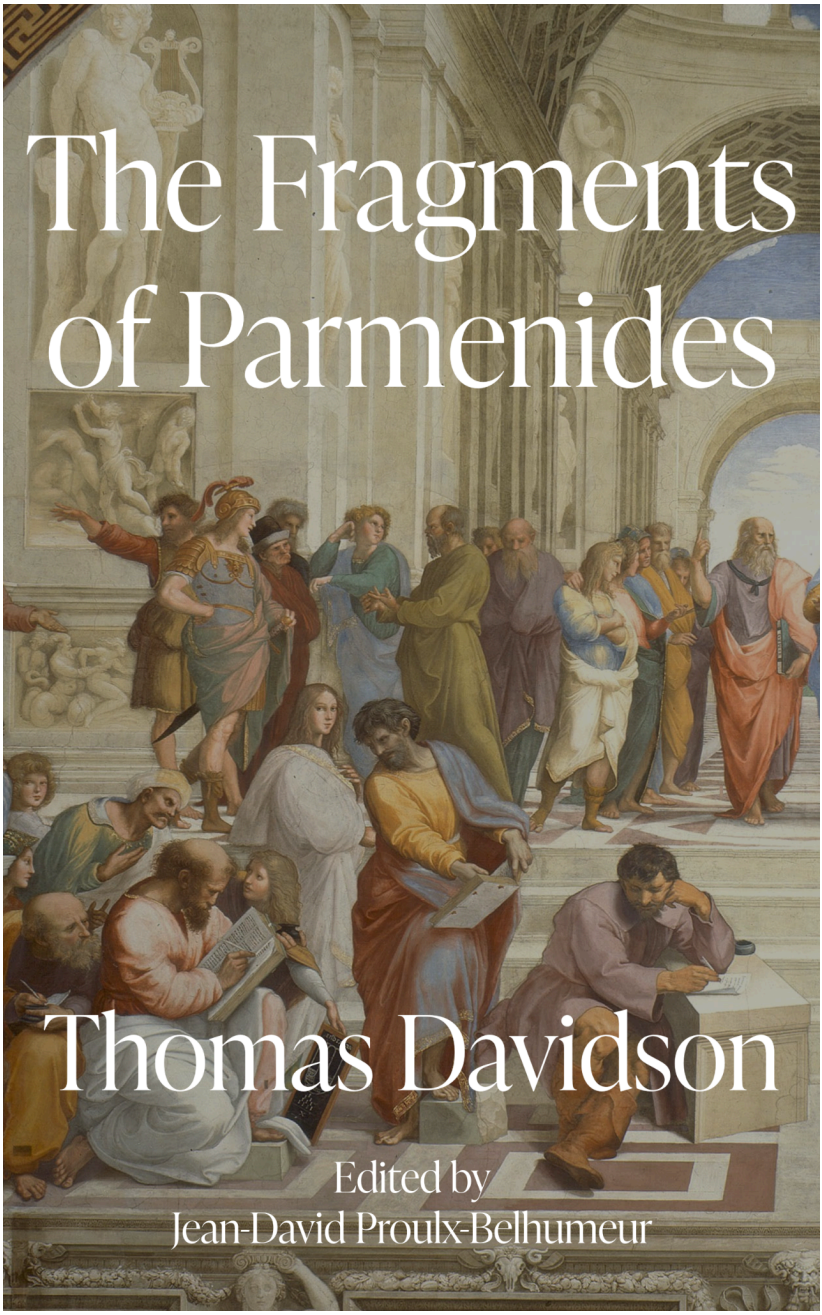
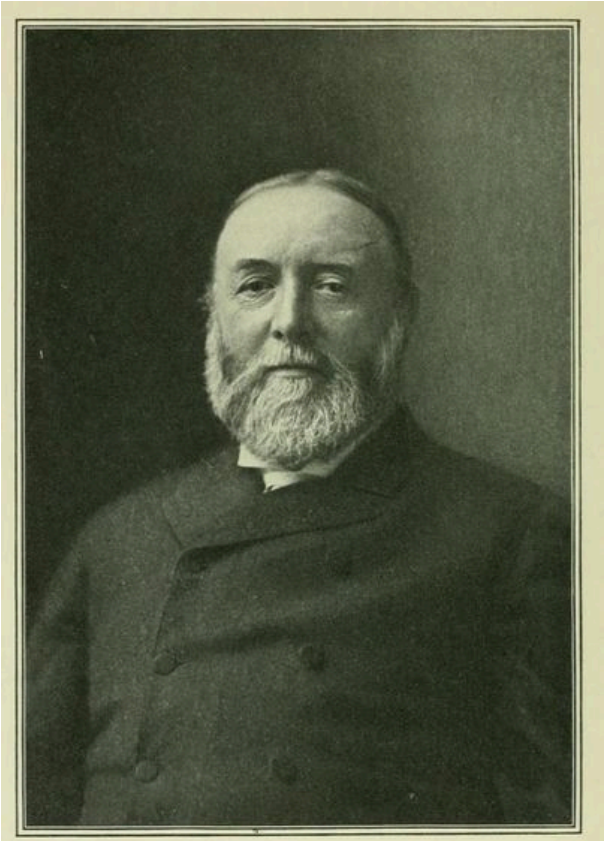

The Fragments of Parmenides
Thomas Davidson
Edited by
Jean-David Proulx-Belhumeur

# THE FRAGMENTS OF PARMENIDES

Translated into English Hexameters

INTRODUCTION AND NOTES
by
THOMAS DAVIDSON
1869



THOMAS DAVIDSON

## Editor’s Note

Thomas Davidson, born in 1840 in Deer, near Aberdeen, Scotland, was a Scottish-American philosopher, teacher and lecturer. Born into a Presbyterian family, he was educated at the University of Aberdeen.

He travelled a lot and learned French, German, Italian, Spanish, Latin and Arabic. In Greece, he devoted himself mainly to archaeology and modern Greek and wrote Fragments of Parmenides in 1869. In Italy, he studied the Catholic Church, scholastic philosophy, Dante, and Rosmini. For studying the Catholic Church, unusual opportunities were thrown open to him, chiefly through the Princess Carolyne zu Sayn-Wittgenstein and Cardinal Hohenlohe, who offered him an apartment in his episcopal palace at Albano, and also in the Villa d'Este at Tivoli. In 1883, he founded the Fellowship of the New Life, a social and political think tank from which the Fabian Society emerged.

His interest in Thomas Aquinas having come to the ears of the pope through Bishop (later Cardinal) Schiatlino, he was invited to the Vatican, where the pope suggested that he should settle in Rome and aid his professors in editing the new edition of St. Thomas.

He became famous for his sociology courses at the Educational Alliance in New York, mainly in his class reserved for students of Jewish origin. He aimed to found among them what he called a “College of Breadwinners,” but his work was interrupted by his sudden death in 1900 in Montreal, Quebec.

- Jean-David Proulx Belhumeur
  Quebec, 2025

## Historical

The Eleatic school of Philosophy is mainly represented by four names: Xenophanes, Parmenides, Melissos, and Zeno. Though the first of these is universally regarded as the founder of the school, Parmenides is the most important figure in it, the Eleatic par excellence. His father's name was Pyrrhes. He himself was a native of Elea or Velia. This city, which was of small importance politically, was founded about 540 B.C. by a colony of Phokaeans. It lay on the western shore of Lucania.

The date of Parmenides' birth is uncertain; but we shall hardly be wrong in placing it in the last quarter of the sixth century B.C. Diogenes Laertius says he flourished about the sixty-ninth Olympiad (504-501 B.C.); but this can hardly be true, if any confidence is to be placed in the statements of Plato. In the dialogue entitled Parmenides we read: “Antiphon stated on the authority of Pythodoros that Zeno and Parmenides once came to the greater Panathemea, Parmenides being at that time quite an old man with grey hair and a handsome and noble countenance, and certainly not over sixty-five years of age; Zeno about forty years old, tall and elegant, said to have been the favourite of Parmenides; He mentioned also that they put up at the house of Pythodoros in the Kerameikos, outside the city walls, and that Socrates and many other persons visited them there, desiring to hear Zeno read his productions, which had then been brought by them for the first time, and that Socrates was then a very young man.”

In the Sophist, Socrates is made to say: “I was present when Parmenides uttered and discussed words of exceeding beauty, I being then a young man, and he was already far advanced in years.” Again, in the Theaetetus, he says : “For I was personally acquainted with the mat), I being very young,

and he very old." Supposing Socrates, who was born about B.C. 469, to have been fifteen years old when he conversed with Parmenides, this would place this meeting in 454 B.C., and the birth of Parmenides in 519. This tallies exactly with the statement of Diogenes that Zeno, who, according to Plato, was twenty-five years younger than Parmenides, flourished about the seventy-ninth Olympiad, 454-451 B.C. Mr. Grote's opinion, which is not much at variance with this, is worth quoting in his own words :

"It will hardly be proper to place the conversation between Parmenides and Socrates — as Mr. Clinton places it, Fast. H. vol. ii. App. c. 21, p. 364 — at a time when Socrates was only fifteen years of age. The ideas which the ancients had about youthful propriety would not permit him to take part in conversation with an eminent philosopher at so early an age as fifteen, when he would not yet be entered on the roll of citizens, or be qualified for the smallest function, military or civil. I cannot but think that Socrates must have been more than twenty years of age when he thus conversed with Parmenides.

Socrates was born in 469 (perhaps 468) B.C. ; he would therefore be twenty years of age in 449 ; assuming the visit of Parmenides to Athens to have been in 448 B.C, since he was then sixty-five years of age, he would be born in 513 B.C. It is objected that, if this date be admitted, Parmenides could not have been a pupil of Xenophanes: we should thus be compelled to admit, which perhaps is the truth, that he learned the doctrine of Xenophanes at second-hand"

Theophrastos informs us that Parmenides was a pupil of Anaximander ; but this can hardly be true, if as Diogenes asserts, on the authority of Apollodoros, Anaximander died in the fifty-eighth Olympiad (548-545 B.C), several years before the founding of Elea. That Parmenides may have been

acquainted with some of the teachings of Anaximander seems not unlikely. The latter had declared the Infinite to be the first principle of all things, a doctrine which it seems to be the intention of Parmenides pointedly to refute and disclaim when he says:

> *Wherefore that that which is should be infinite, is not permitted.*

It was currently reported in Aristotle's time that Parmenides was a pupil of Xenophanes, and we have every reason to believe that he was. We learn also that he was intimate with several Pythagoreans, two of whom, Ameinias and Diochsetes, are mentioned. He is said to have admired them greatly, to have adopted to a considerable extent their mode of life, and to have erected a Heroön to the memory of Diochsetes.

Parmenides was no mere dreamer. Like Empedokles and others, he took an active part in the public affairs of his native city, and drew up a code of laws, to which the Eleans every year swore to conform. He was the friend of Empedokles and Leukippos, and the teacher of Melissos and Zeno. He disseminated his philosophy not only by his writings, but also, as we have seen, by public lectures and discussions. He employed in his discussions the Dialectic method of reasoning which had been invented by Xenophanes, and was afterwards so much improved and used by Zeno as to be considered his invention. We are not aware that Parmenides left any prose writings. Like most of the contemporary philosophers, he committed his teachings to verse and indeed, if we may believe Proklos and Cicero, was not very successful in doing so. The former says his diction was more like prose than poetry, and the latter that his verses were inferior, but the

matter of them sometimes pretty forcible; which we can believe.

The only work of Parmenides known to the ancients, and probably the only one he, ever composed, was the poem entitled On Nature whereof considerable fragments have come down to us — preserved mainly in the works of Plato, Sextus Empeiricus, Proklos, and Simplicius. The ancients regarded the poem as divided into two parts, the one On Truth or On the Intelligible, the other On Opinion or On the Perceptible. The latter is called by Plutarch a Cosmogony, and not without reason, for in it Parmenides seems to have attempted, without denying the existence of the gods, to explain them upon physical principles. In what esteem this poem was held by the ancients we may learn from the writings of Plato and Aristotle, as well as from many later productions. Much that is put into the mouth of Parmenides in the Platonic dialogue which bears his name, we must ascribe to Plato himself, or to whoever was the author. This dialogue, which according to Hegel contains “the sublimest dialectic that ever was,” is held by some critics not to be from the pen of Plato.

The following translation is made from the Fragments as they stand in Mullach's Fragmenta Philosophorum Graecorum, Paris, Didot. Though I have adopted his arrangement, I have not in all cases adopted his readings, which are, in one or two instances, I think, very inconsiderate. 1 have used every effort to make the translation literal, and I think it will be found to be so. As to my verses, I may plead that, if Parmenides was unable to write his Philosophy in good Greek hexameters, I may be excused for not being able to translate them into good English ones. In the notes, I have brought together all the valuable information I have been able to and regarding the different parts of the work of Parmenides.

## On Nature

### I. Introduction.

Soon as the coursers that bear me and drew me as far as extendeth
Impulse, guided me and threw me aloft in the glorious pathway,
Up to the Goddess that guideth through all things man that is conscious,
There was I carried along, for there did the coursers sagacious,
Drawing the chariot, bear me, and virgins preceded to guide them —
Daughters of Helios leaving behind them the mansions of darkness —
Into the light, with their strong hands forcing asunder the night-shrouds,
While in its sockets the axle emitted the sound of a syrinx,
Glowing, for still it was urged by a couple of wheels well-rounded,
One upon this side, one upon that, when it hastened its motion.
There were the gates of the paths of the Night and the paths of the Day-time.
Under the gates is a threshold of stone and above is a lintel.
These too are closed in the ether with great doors guarded by Justice —
Justice the mighty avenger, that keepeth the keys of requital.
Her did the virgins address, and with soft words deftly persuaded,

Swiftly for them to withdraw from the gates the bolt and its fastener.
Opening wide, they uncovered the yawning expanse of the portal,
Backward rolling successive the hinges of brass in their sockets, —
Hinges constructed with nails and with clasps; then onward the virgins
Straightway guided their steeds and their chariot over the highway.
Then did the goddess receive me with gladness, and taking my right hand
Into her own, thus uttered a word and kindly bespake me:
Youth that art mated with charioteers and companions immortal,
Coming to us on the coursers that bear thee, to visit our mansion,
Hail ! for it is not an evil Award that hath guided thee hither,
Into this path — for, I ween, it is far from the pathway of mortals
Nay, it is Justice and Eight. Thou needs must have knowledge of all things,
Firsts of the Truth's unwavering heart that is fraught with conviction,
Then of the notions of mortals, where no true conviction abideth,
But thou shalt surely be taught this too, that every opinion
Needs must pass through the All, and vanquish the test with approval.

## II. On Truth.

Listen, and I will instruct thee — and thou, when thou hearest, shalt ponder —
What are the sole two paths of research that are open to thinking?
One path is: That Being doth be, and Non-Being is not:
This is the way of Conviction, for Truth follows hard in her footsteps.
The other path is: That Being is not, and Non-Being must be;
Parmenides.
This one, I tell thee in truth, is an all-incredible pathway.
For thou never canst know what is not (for none can conceive it),
Nor canst thou give it expression, for one thing are Thinking and Being.

"And to me 'tis indifferent Whence I begin, for thither again thou shalt find me returning."

Speaking and thinking must needs be existent, for Is is of Being.
Nothing must needs not be; these things I enjoin thee to ponder.
Foremost of all withdraw thy mind from this path of inquiry,
Then likewise from that other, wherein men, empty of knowledge,
Wander forever uncertain, while Doubt and Perplexity guide them —
Guide in their bosoms the wandering mind ; and onward they hurry,

Deaf and dumb and blind and stupid, unreasoning cattle —
Herds that are wont to think Being and Non-Being one and the self-same,
Yet not one and the same; and that all things move in a circle.

Never I ween shalt thou learn that Being can be of what is not;
Wherefore do thou withdraw thy mind from this path of inquiry,
Neither let habit compel thee, while treading this pathway of knowledge,
Still to employ a visionless eye or an ear full of ringing,
Yea, or a clamorous tongue; but prove this vext demonstration
Uttered by me, by reason.
And now there remains for discussion One path only :
That Being doth be — and on it there are tokens,
Many and many to show that what is is birthless and deathless,
Whole and only-begotten, and moveless and ever-enduring:
Never it was or shall be; but the all simultaneously now is,
One continuous one; for of it what birth shalt thou search for?
How and whence it hath sprung? I shall not permit thee to tell me,
Neither to think: ' Of what is not,' for none can say or imagine
How Not-Is becomes Is; or else what need should have stirred it,
After or yet before its beginning, to issue from nothing?
Thus either wholly Being must be or wholly must not be.
Never from that which is will the force of Intelligence suffer
Aught to become beyond being itself.
Thence neither production Neither destruction doth Justice permit, ne'er slackening her fetters;
But she forbids. And herein is contained the decision of these things;

Either there is or is not; but Judgment declares, as it needs must,
One of these paths to be uncomprehended and utterly nameless,
No true pathway at all, but the other to be and be real. How can that which is now be hereafter, or how can it have been?
For if it hath been before, or shall be hereafter, it is not:
Thus generation is quenched and decay surpasseth believing.
Nor is there aught of distinct; for the All is self-similar alway.
Nor is there anywhere more to debar it from being unbroken;
Nor is there anywhere less, for the All is sated with Being;
Wherefore the All is unbroken, and Being approacheth to Being.
Moveless, moreover, and bounded by great chains' limits it lieth,
Void of beginning, without any ceasing, since birth and destruction
Both have wandered afar, driven forth by the truth of conviction.
Same in the same and abiding, and self through itself it reposes.
Steadfast thus it endureth, for mighty Necessity holds it —
Holds it within the chains of her bounds and round doth secure it.
Wherefore that that which is should be infinite is not permitted;
For it is lacking in naught, or else it were lacking in all things.

Steadfastly yet in thy spirit regard things absent as present;
Surely thon shalt not separate Being from clinging to Being,
Nor shalt thou find it scattered at all through the All of the Cosmos,
Nor yet gathered together.

One and the same are thought and that whereby there is thinking;
Never apart from existence, wherein it receiveth expression,
Shalt thou discover the action of thinking; for naught is or shall be
Other besides or beyond the Existent; for Fate hath determined
That to be lonely and moveless, which all things are but a name for —
Things that men have set up for themselves, believing as real
Birth and decay, becoming and ceasing, to be and to not-be,
Movement from place to place, and change from color to color.
But since the uttermost limit of Being is ended and perfect,
Then it is like to the bulk of a sphere well-rounded on all sides,
Everywhere distant alike from the centre; for never there can be
Anything greater or anything less, on this side or that side;
Yea, there is neither a non-existent to bar it from coming
Into equality, neither can Being be different from Being.
More of it here, less there, for the All is inviolate ever.
Therefore, I ween, it lies equally stretched in its limits on all sides.
And with this will I finish the faithful discourse and the thinking
Touching the truth, and now thou shalt learn the notions of mortals.
Learn and list to the treacherous array of the words I shall utter.

## III. On Opinion.

Men have set up for themselves twin shapes to be named by Opinion,
(One they cannot set up, and herein do they wander in error,)
And they have made them distinct in their nature, and marked them with tokens,
Opposite each unto each—the one, flame's fire of the ether,
Gentle, exceedingly thin, and everywhere one and the self-same,
But not the same with the other; the other, self-similar likewise,
Standing opposed by itself, brute might, dense nature and heavy.
All the apparent system of these will I open before thee,
So that not any opinion of mortals shall ever elude thee.

All things now being marked with the names of light and of darkness,
Yea, set apart by the various powers of the one or the other,
Surely the All is at once full of light and invisible darkness,
Both being equal, and naught being common to one with the other.

For out of formless fire are woven the narrower circlets,
Those over these out of night; but a portion of flame shooteth through them.
And in the centre of all is the Goddess that governeth all things:
She unto all is the author of loathsome birth and coition,

Causing the female to mix with the male, and by mutual impulse
Likewise the male with the female.

Foremost of gods, she gave birth unto Love; yea, foremost of all gods.

Then thou shalt know the ethereal nature and each of its tokens
Each of the signs in the ether, and all the invisible workings
Wrought by the blemishless sun's pure lamp, and whence they have risen,
Then thou shalt hear of the orb-eyed moon's circumambient workings,
And of her nature, and likewise discern the heaven that surrounds them,
Whence it arose, and how by her sway Necessity bound it,
Firm, to-encircle the bounds of the stars.

How the earth and the sun, and the moon, and the ether
Common to all, and the milk of the sky, and the peak of Olympus,
Yea, and the fervent might of the stars, were impelled into being.

Circling the earth, with its wanderings, a borrowed, a night-gleaming splendor.

Wistfully watching forever, with gaze turned towards the sun-light.

Even as in each one of men is a union of limbs many-jointed.
So there is also in each one a mind; for one and the same are

That which is wise and the nature generic of members in mortals,
Yea, unto each and to all ; for that which prevaileth is thinking.

Here on the right hand the youths, and there on the left hand the maidens.

Thus by the strength of opinion were these created and now are,
Yea, and will perish hereafter, as soon as they grow unto ripeness;
Men have imposed upon each one of these a name as a token.”

## NOTES.

1. This introduction has generally been looked upon as allegorical. In one sense it is so; at the same time we must not forget that what in its own day was the soberest statement of facts that could be made, frequently appears to succeeding ages as allegorical. Primitive peoples found it far easier to embody new thoughts and feelings in the concrete forms of their mythology, with which they were familiar, than to describe them in abstract terms. If we find Parmenides saying that he was borne aloft by horses to the presence of the Goddess who governs all things, we must not forget that our own language is not altogether free from allegory, when we say that he "rose to higher regions of thought." Parmenides did not mean to make an allegory; he simply gave an account of his mental progress in the ordinary mythological dialect of his time, and that, from our point of view, seems allegorical.

2. If we compare the opening of this with a passage in the fifth book of the Iliad, where Here and Athene visit Zeus in their chariot, we cannot fail to be struck with the similarity of the two. "And Here touched the steeds sharply with the whip, and, of their own accord, the gates of the sky, kept by the Horoe, to whom are entrusted the wide sky, and Olympus, to fold back the dense cloud, and to replace it, burst open. And through these they guided their goaded steeds, and found the son of Kronos sitting afar from the other gods on the summit of many-peaked Olympus." We need not be very anxious to determine precisely what Parmenides meant by coursers or by chariot. Imaginations capable of furnishing the sun with a chariot for his daily course might surely be pardoned for giving

the soul one, when it ascends into the pure ether of thought, without our supposing that it must represent the appetites or anything else in particular. A chariot was the recognized means of rising aloft, not only among the Greeks but also among the ancient Indians, the Hebrews (witness the story of Elijah), and other nations. That Parmenides, when his mind was expanding, and, as it were, grasping the whole Universe in one thought, should have felt that he was coming into the region of the gods, and pictured himself as furnished with their means of locomotion, one can readily believe. If this is oncet admitted, we need not spend much labor in attempting to interpret minute points about the chariot or its axles. Sextus Empeiricus, in whose work Adversus Mathematicos this introduction is for the most part preserved, makes a comment upon it, which we must take for what it is worth. Sextus lived at a time when philosophers were finding allegories in everything ancient ; witness his contemporary Porphyry's Cave of the Nymphs. His views of what Parmenides may have thought, and his ideas concerning the imagery likely to have suggested itself to Parmenides, can have no authority whatever. He says: “In these lines, Parmenides says he is borne by coursers — that is, the irrational impulses and appetites of the soul — along the noble and glorious pathway of a goddess that is, the path of contemplation based on philosophic reason. For reason, like a guiding deity, conducts to the knowledge of all things. And her daughters go before — namely, the senses. He refers to the ears when he says : It was urged by a couple of wheels well-rounded by the wheels (circles), that is, of the ears, through which they receive sound. Intuitions he calls l daughters of the Sun, who leave the mansions of darkness and move [their veils] toward the light, because without light there would be no use for them. He says he came to Diké or avenging Justice, 'who keepeth the keys of requital,' that is, to

thought, which has the sure and steadfast comprehension of things. She, having received him, promises to teach him two things,

> First of the Truth's unwavering heart that is fraught with persuasion,

that is, the unswerving step of science;

> Then of the notions of mortals, where no true conviction abideth,

that is, whatever is matter of opinion, as being, for that reason, uncertain. In the end she makes the clear declaration, that the senses are not to be trusted, but only the reason. She says:

> Neither let habit compel thee, while treacling this pathway of knowledge,
> Still to employ a visionless eye, or an ear full of ringing,
> Yea, or a clamorous tongue; but try this vext demonstration
> Uttered by me, by Reason.

From this it is plain that he (Parmenides) also, in pronouncing the scientific reason to be the canon of truth in regard to the things that are (in matters of ontology), revolted against the authority of the senses."

3. (See note 7.)

4. The daughters of the Sun, in the mythological account, were AEgle, Lampetie, and Phaethousa — Radiance, Sheen, and Gleam. The allegory here is very simple. Pindar calls the sun's ray the "Farseeing mother of the eyes," and the sun himself the "Birth-giving father of the sharp rays," and the

"Lord of the fire-breathing steeds." Preller, in his Griechische Mythologie, says: "From his radiant light Holios is called Phaothon, and also the glittering eye of Heaven or of Zeus ; because the eye is the light of the body, and has therefore, in all times, been used as an expression for all the radiant and gleaming phenomena of the sky. For the same reason Helios is the all-seeing, all-observing, all-investigating, the general spy of gods and men, to whom nothing is hidden or secret. He is likewise a god of the truth of all that is concealed, a god who was wont to be invoked in oaths and by oppressed innocence. From this, the further transition to the principle of wisdom and cognition was easy; and, in this sense, Parmenides, in the opening of his philosophico-didactic poem, tells us that he rose to the heights of knowledge riding in the chariot of the sun, and guided by the daughters of Helios; while Pindar, in a very beautiful poem, composed on the occasion of a solar eclipse, had called the ray of the sun the "mother of the eyes, and the fountain of wisdom." Passages might be quoted from the tragedians to show that the sun was considered the source of sight and blindness, e.g. Eurip. Hekabe, 1066-8; Soph. O. C. 869.

5. The chariot of the sun is not mentioned in Homer. It is first noticed in the so-called Homeric Hymn to Helios. No particular meaning is to be attached to the axles or wheels; they are mentioned simply to show the ease and rapidity of the motion.

6. In the passage quoted from Homer in note 2, we learn that the gates of the sky were kept by the Soros. The names of these, according to Hesiod, are Eunomia, Dike, and Eirene — Order, Justice, and Peace. Thus Parmenides, in making Justice the guardian of the gates of the sky, adheres to the ordinary mythology. We learn also from Hesiod — Works and Days, 254 sq. — that Justice was greatly revered by the

Olympian gods, standing in very close relation to Zeus, and keeping watch for him over the transgressions of men. The Horse, it must be remembered, are the daughters of Zeus and Themis (Eight). "We need not be astonished at the materials of which the gates are said to be made. Even Homer speaks of the heaven as "brazen," "all-brazen" and "iron."

7. The Goddess (0ea) here meant is evidently the same as the one referred to in line 3, and there called Aaqnov. Patter, in his History of Philosophy, misled perhaps by Sextus Empeiricus, supposes Dike to be meant. But this is evidently wrong; for Dike is merely the gatekeeper in the mansion of a higher power. Mullach sees this and corrects Ritter, but is nearly as far wrong himself when he affirms that the goddess meant is Wisdom. There are two things particularly to be remarked in regard to the personages mentioned in this poem ; — first, their names are always significant; second, not one of them is a personification made by the poet himself, but all are taken from the already existing mythology. There is no mention of Zeus, or Athene, or Apollo, or any of the Olympians, neither do we meet with any mere abstract term personified. I cannot find any proof that the Greeks ever personified Wisdom. Pindar, indeed, in his poem On a Solar Eclipse, speaks of “the path of Wisdom” and I doubt not but similar expressions might be found elsewhere; still this does not amount to a personification of Wisdom. If we observe carefully, we shall, I think, be able to discover the name of the goddess meant. In lines 26, 27, we are informed that it was not an evil fate (Motpa) that had brought the philosopher to the goddess, but that it was Justice and Right (Themis). Now we know already what part Justice (Dike) has taken in bringing him thither; but, so far as we know, Themis has done nothing towards it. Now we know in regard to Themis that she stood in very close relation to Zeus (Odyssey II. 68); that she was by some held to

be the eldest of the gods; that Aeschylus considered her identical with Gaia (Earth); that she was the goddess of law and order; that she was endowed with knowledge of the future, and that the Delphic oracle belonged to her. before it passed over to Apollo. Pindar tells us, that "First the Fates bore the well-counselled, celestial Themis in their golden chariot from the springs of Ocean to the awful slope of Olympus, along the shining path, to be the time-honored spouse of Zeus the Saviour." The Fates, who led Themis to Olympus, are daughters of Night, whereas the guides of Parmenides are the daughters of the Sun; this fact would almost seem to throw light upon line 7. However this may be, if we consider all the attributes and the lofty position of Themis, we shall probably be convinced that she is the goddess referred to by Parmenides. If this be true, Parmenides may be supposed to have meant that insight led him to justice or right action, from which he passed to the mother or source of justice, which explained everything to him.

8. The goddess here mentions two paths, and, a few lines farther on, adds that they are the only ones open to thinking. In line 45, she mentions another path, which however is not open to thinking, being trod only by “unreasoning cattle.”

9. This line I have translated in a manner entirely different from that of any of the editors of the Fragments. In doing so, I have rejected Mullach's entirely unauthorized reading, and retained that of one of the best MSS. I understand the line to mean, that every concept which sets itself up as the first principle must be tested by being made universal. If it can stand without any presuppositions, then it is the "True First Principle"; if it does not, it must be rejected. (See Jour, of Spec. Phil., Vol. III., No. 3, p. 288.)

10. Some space has been devoted to elucidating this Introduction, because the interpretation put upon it by Sextus Empeiricus has generally been accepted as the true one.

11. The goddess now begins her discourse on Truth, the burden of which is that is the universal predicate, and that there is no not-is. She warns her hearer to avoid believing the opposite doctrine. She sustains the true one by the argument that nothing can be thought or affirmed of that which has no being, and thence arrives at the famous conclusion that being and thinking are identical. Plotinus remarks upon this passage: "Previously (to Plato) Parmenides likewise touched upon this view, inasmuch as he reduced Being and mind to the same thing, and affirmed that mind did not lie in the objects of sensation. For when he says that to think and to be are the same thing, he says that this is immovable, and, although he attributes to it the power of thinking, he deprives it of all corporeal movement in order that it may remain unchanged, and likens it to the bulk of a sphere because it holds and comprehends everything, and because thinking is not outside but inside of itself." (Enneads, V. 1, 8.)

12. Proklos's interpretation of these lines runs thus: "For Parmenides saw Being itself (as has been said before), that which is abstracted from all things, and the highest of things that are, that wherein the existent was primarily manifested: not that he ignored the multiplicity of objects of intelligence; for it was he who said, 'For Being approaches to Being'; and again,

> To me 'tis indifferent
> Whence I begin, for thither again thou shalt find me returning;

and elsewhere,

Everywhere distant alike from the centre' (line 103).

By all these expressions he shows that he considers that the objects of intelligence are many, and that there is a hierarchy among them of first, and middle, and second, and an ineffable union y thus not ignoring the multiplicity of the things that are, but seeing that the whole of this multiplicity has proceeded from the one Being. For there is the fountain of Being, and the home thereof, and the hidden Being from which the things that are draw their unity."

13. Plato, in a connection similar to this, says : "For these things are mere word-puzzles, and it is impossible to affirm in thought whether Being, or Non-Being, or both, or neither, belongs to any one of them." (Rep. V. 479, C.) Neither Parmenides nor Plato had an opportunity of reading Hegel's Logic, in which it is expressly affirmed that pure Being and pure Nothing are the same.

14. Plato says : "For the was and the shall be are generated forms of time, although we inadvertently and wrongly apply them to the eternal essence. For we say that it was, is, and shall be; yet the is only belongs to it truly, whereas was and shall be are properly predicated of that generation which goes forward in time." (Tim. 37, E.) Compare The Sentences of Porphyry, Jour, of Spec. Phil., Vol. III., No. 1. The whole of this fragment bears a striking resemblance to one of the hymns in the tenth book of the Big-Yeda. The following translation of it is taken from

Max Mtiller's History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature, p. 546:

Nor aught nor naught existed; yon bright sky
Was not, nor heaven's broad woof outstretched above.

What covered all? what sheltered? what concealed?
Was it the water's fathomless abyss?
There was not death — hence was there naught immortal,
There was no confine betwixt day and night;
The only One breathed breathless in itself,
Other than it there nothing since has been.
Darkness there was, and all at first was veiled
In gloom profound — an ocean without light.
The germ that still lay covered in the husk
Burst forth, one nature, from the fervent heat.
Then first came Love upon it, the new spring
Of mind; yea, poets in their hearts discerned,
Pondering, this bond between created things
And uncreated. Comes this spark from earth,
Piercing and all-pervading, or from heaven?
Then seeds were sown and mighty power arose
Nature below, and Power and Will above.
Who knows the secret? who proclaimed it here,
Whence, whence this manifold creation sprang?
The gods themselves came later into being.
Who knows from whence this great creation sprang?
He from whom all this great creation came,
Whether his will created or was mute,
The Most High Seer that is in highest heaven,
He knows it — or, perchance, e'en he knows not.

15. Aristotle seems to have this passage in view, when he says : "Parmenides seems to hold to the One of reason, and Melissos to the One of matter. Accordingly the former affirms that the One is finite, the latter that it is infinite." Simplicius put the argument of Parmenides in a syllogistic form. "If Being is, and not Non-Being, it must be free from

deficiency : but, being free from deficiency, it is perfect; and being perfect, it must have an end, and is therefore not endless. Having an end, it has a limit and a boundary." It is impossible to render into English the word-quibble on Telos and Téaetoy to which Simplicius here condescends.

16. This is a very clear statement of the doctrine promulgated by Spinoza — the Parmenides of modern philosophy. Hegel (History of Philosophy, Vol. III., p. 372) says: "The simple thought of the idealism of Spinoza is : what is true is simply and solely the one substance whose attributes are thinking and extension (Nature) : and this absolute unity alone is actual, is the actuality — it alone is God" (p. 376). "This, in general terms, is the Spinozan idea. It is the same as the *oy* of the Eleatics. It is the oriental view, which Spinoza was the first to utter in the "West. In general, we may remark that thought had of necessity to occupy the standpoint of Spinozism; that is the true beginning of all philosophy. If one begins to philosophise, he must begin by being a Spinozist. The soul must bathe in this ether of the one substance, wherein all that was held to be true has vanished. It is to this negation of all particularity that every philosopher must come: it is the freeing of the spirit, and forms its absolute basis. The difference between the latter and the Eleatic philosophy is simply this, that, owing to the influence of Christianity in the modern world, there is present in the mind generally a more concrete individuality. Notwithstanding this infinite demand for the wholly concrete, however, substance is not defined as concrete in itself. Inasmuch, therefore, as the concrete does not lie in the content of substance, it must fall back upon the reflective thinking, and then it is only from the infinite antitheses of the latter that the unity results. Of substance as such nothing more can be predicated; we can speak only of philosophizing concerning it, and of the antitheses cancelled in it. All

distinction depends simply upon the nature of the antitheses that are cancelled in it. Spinoza has been very far from demonstrating this as clearly as the ancients took the trouble to do." The two following propositions from Spinoza's Ethics will illustrate this :

Book I. Prop. XIV. Besides God no substance can be or be conceived.

Demonstration. Since God is an absolutely infinite Being, of which no attribute expressing the essence of substance can be denied, and he exists of necessity ; if there were any substance besides God, it would have to be explained by some attribute of God, and thus two substances having the same attribute would exist, which is absurd. Wherefore there can be no substance besides God, and hence none such can be conceived. For if it could be conceived, it would necessarily be conceived as existing, and this, according to the former part of this demonstration, is absurd. Wherefore, besides God, &c. Q. B. D.

Book II. Prop. I. Thought is an attribute of God, or God is a thinking thing.

17. Simplicius, in commenting upon this passage, says: "We need not wonder if he says that the one Being is like to the bulk of a well rounded sphere; for by this figure he merely aims at a sort of mythological image."

18. Aristotle, Metaph. I, 5, says : Parmenides seems to speak more circumspectly. For laying down Being, and considering Not-Being to be nothing, he of necessity thinks Being to be one, and nothing else.

But being compelled to follow the phenomena, and assuming that the One is according to reason, and plurality according to sense, he again lays down the two causes and two first principles, hot and cold — meaning, for example, fire and earth. The former of these, the hot, he arranges on the

side of Being, the other on that of Non-Being." In the extant fragments of Parmenides there is no mention of heat or cold, but only of light and darkness.

19. The word for circlets does not occur in the original, but Cicero (De Natura Deorum I. 11) tells us : "Parmenides makes a sort of fiction in the likeness of a crown. He gives it the name of *oteqavn*, as encircling with a glow of light the sphere which surrounds the heaven, and which he calls God, wherein no one can perceive either divine figure or sense." One is almost tempted, in reading this fragment, to believe that, according to the view of Parmenides, the sun occupied the centre of the material universe, and that the Anima Mundi, or Power that governed all things, was situated in the centre of the sun. There is extant a hymn of Proklos To the Sim, of which the opening lines may be translated thus:

> Give ear, O'king of intellectual light;
> Gold-reined Titan, light's Dispenser, hear!
> O king, that holdest in thy hands the key
> Of life's sustaining fount, and from above
> Dost lead throughout the wide material worlds,
> In streams, the brimming fount of harmony,
> Give ear; for, seated on the central throne
> Above the ether, in the fulgent orb,
> The Universe's heart, thou fillest all
> With thine own spirit-waking forward thought.
> The planets, life-lit at thy fadeless torch,
> Forever in their ceaseless and unwearied rounds
> Send life-engendering beams to all on earth,
> While underneath thine ever-circling car,
> By firm decree, the sister seasons spring.
> The din of clashing elements was staid
> When thou appeard'st, sprung from a nameless sire.

To thee the Fates' unvanquished band gave way,
And backward twist the thread of destiny
At thy behest; for thou art mightier far,
And rulest mightily with royal power."

There are many points of resemblance between this poem and the fragments of Parmenides, and, as Proklos was well acquainted with the work of the latter, we may with some probability suppose that he adopted his cosmological views. Erdmann, in his Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie,. says : "Parmenides' ideas of the construction of the Universe are either incorrectly handed down, or are unintelligible from their peculiarity of expression. They did not prevent him from having, for his time, important astronomical information." This is clear from lines 143-4, which evidently refer to the moon.

20. This agrees somewhat with Hesiod's statement that Eros (Love) was the child of Chaos and Earth. (Theogony, 121.) Compare also note 14, and Preller's Griechische Mythologie, Yol. I., p. 393. We know also from Aristotle that Parmenides made Love one of the prime movers. The other of the two primal causes (afrtac'), mentioned by Aristotle, was doubtless Hate, as indeed we are told by Cicero. This, again, brings us very close to the doctrine of Empedokles, whose two great physical principles are Friendship (^dorvjc) and Strife (wuu?), or, as we should say in modern times, attraction and repulsion.

21. Theophrastos's note on this passage is: "Since there are two elements, the cognition is according to the one that prevails ; for, according as the hot or the cold has the upper hand, the thought will differ."

22. The following Latin version of a passage of Parmenides, probably connected with this, but no longer extant, occurs in Coelius Aurelianus De Morb. Chron. IV. 9 :

*"Femina virque simul veneris quum semina miscent*
*Venis, infornians diverso ex sanguine virtus,*
*Temperieni servans, bene condita corpora fingit;*
*At si virtutes permixto semine pugnent*
*Nee faciant unam, permixto in corpore dirse*
*Nascentetn srenimo vexabunt semine sexum."*